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IN

SUBJECT: DELHI DIARY, MAY 5-9

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

**¶11. (U)** Below is a compilation of political highlights from Embassy New Delhi for May 5-9, 2007 that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

-- GOI Responds to LTTE Air Attacks in Sri Lanka with Increased Vigilance in the South  
-- Think-tanker: Lantos Letter "Less Than Diplomatic"  
-- India's UK Envoy the Front Runner for Secretary General of the Commonwealth?  
-- India, Bhutan to Strengthen Military Cooperation

GOI Responds to LTTE Air Attacks in Sri Lanka with Increased Vigilance in the South

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**¶12. (SBU)** The May 9 edition of "The Hindu" reported that a decision to increase air and naval surveillance in the Tamil Nadu's coastal regions was made by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee on May 8. Mukherjee allegedly came to the conclusion after chairing a meeting which Defense Minister A.K. Anthony, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan, Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon, Air Marshal F.H. Major and Chief of the Naval Staff Sureesh Mehta attended. The directive is an apparent response to the recent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) air attacks on the Government of Sri Lanka's air base just north of Colombo (Katunayake) on March 26, its largest military base in the north (Palaly) on April 26, and subsequent April 30 aerial attacks on an oil refinery in Kolonnawa and a liquefied petroleum gas refinery in Mutherajawela.

Think-tanker: Lantos Letter "Less Than Diplomatic"

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**¶13. (C)** Political strategist Subhash Agrawal told PolCouns May 7 that the May 2 letter from U.S. legislators to the Prime Minister warning the Indian government against ties to Iran had been "less than diplomatic," noting that Indians did not understand the American political process and were not used to a wide participation in a foreign policy debate. He suggested that Congressman Lantos could have achieved a better result with quiet, private communication. Agrawal opined that continued public talk about the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) natural gas pipeline was

counterproductive, and felt that the public debate and ire caused by the letter had "pushed the (United Progressive Alliance) government into a corner," making them more likely to pursue the IPI pipeline. Agrawal was hopeful that the fallout could be contained. "It has left a bad taste in the mouth, but that is all," said the analyst. Conceding that India's recent exchange of official visits with Iran had been "optically jarring," he suggested that India needed to become more savvy. There was no real indication that IPI negotiations would get off the ground, according to Agrawal, who remarked that India and Iran "could talk for fifteen years and nothing would come of it."

India's UK Envoy the Front Runner for Secretary General of the Commonwealth?

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14. (C) Media has reported that SAARC members decided it was time for a South Asian to hold the post of Secretary General of the Commonwealth, whose member countries have a combined population of approximately two billion. Two Indian candidates appear to be in the running for the position, which will be voted upon in November at the Uganda Summit of the Commonwealth. Sources at the UK High Commission tell us the front runner is India's envoy to the UK, Kamlesh Sharma, who is known to be close to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Another confidant of the PM is also in the running: former Foreign Secretary and current Special Envoy Shyam Saran. Rumors suggest that Saran may end up posted to Moscow. Careful not to repeat the humiliation of its performance in the UN Secretary General race, where Shashi Tharoor lost to Ban Ki-Moon, India is waiting for the right moment to put forward its candidate. Malta has fielded Foreign Minister

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Michael Fraendo, formerly Chairperson of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

India, Bhutan to Strengthen Military Cooperation

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15. (U) Indian media reported that the Vice-Chief of the Indian Army, Lt. Gen. Deepak Kapoor, was in Thimpu May 2)4. He met with King Wangchuck as well as the Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, Goongloen Wogma Batoo Tshering. Tshering told Kuensel that Kapoor's visit would

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&further strengthen8 Indo-Bhutanese military ties. Indian government-run news channel Doordarshan interpreted that statement in the context of Kapoor's earlier role as commander of anti-insurgency forces in Assam, that Bhutan and India would begin closer military coordination to combat Assamese insurgents believed to be operating again in southern Bhutan on India's border.

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